

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor & Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Brett Guthrie  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Energy and  
Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor & Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Energy and  
Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
328 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable GT Thompson  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
328 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Angie Craig  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Chairman Guthrie, Chairman Boozman, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Sanders, Ranking Member Pallone, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Ranking Member Craig:

The undersigned members of the food industry respectfully request that you work across committees of jurisdiction to clarify a date-labeling standard that applies to any food products in the United States that have date labels. Research shows confusion over date labels leads to 4.3 million tons of food waste in the U.S. every year,<sup>1</sup> costing American households and businesses more than \$22 billion per year.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, more than 30 percent of all food goes

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<sup>1</sup> *Food Waste Monitor*, REFED INSIGHTS ENGINE, [https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break\\_by=cause&indicator=tons-surplus&view=detail&year=2023](https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=cause&indicator=tons-surplus&view=detail&year=2023) (displaying surplus food generated, in tons, by all sectors according to cause of surplus) (last updated Feb. 24, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> *Food Waste Monitor*, REFED INSIGHTS ENGINE, [https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break\\_by=cause&indicator=us-dollars-surplus&view=detail&year=2023](https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=cause&indicator=us-dollars-surplus&view=detail&year=2023) (displaying surplus food generated, in dollars, by all sectors according to cause of surplus) (last updated Feb. 24, 2025).

unsold or uneaten<sup>3</sup> while nearly 1 in 7 American households (18.3 million households) are food insecure, including nearly 1 in 5 households with children.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, farmers, manufacturers, households, and businesses across the country spend over \$338 billion every year to grow, process, transport and dispose of food that is never eaten.<sup>5</sup>

Standardizing and clarifying date labels on food is one of the most cost-effective ways to ensure that usable food is not wasted. Research shows that many consumers incorrectly think that date labels indicate the date after which food is no longer safe to eat. In reality, date labels are often a manufacturer's estimate of a product's optimal quality. With at least 47 labels used across the United States,<sup>6</sup> 43% of consumers usually or always discard food because of the date and 88% of consumers do so at least occasionally.<sup>7</sup> To save consumers money and limit the amount of food unnecessarily thrown away, action needs to be taken to clear up consumer confusion about the meaning of date labels.

We support establishing standardized and voluntary date-labeling, as proposed in the bipartisan Food Date Labeling Act of 2025 (H.R. 4987; S. 2541). This commonsense legislation would:

- Clarify that if food businesses choose to include a date label on their food product, they must use one of two standard date labels. They may select either a quality label, indicating the date after which a food product's quality may deteriorate, using the phrase "BEST If Used By" or a discard label, indicating the date after which a food product should be discarded, using the phrase "USE By."
- Require the USDA and the FDA to work together to provide education on the meaning of the standardized date labels.
- Make donations of food past the quality date universally permissible, provided it meets safety specifications.

Current date label regulation consists of a patchwork of state laws that would be streamlined by this proposal. Standardizing and clarifying date labels is one of the most practical ways to reduce food waste nationally, save American households money, and ensure more food reaches the people who need it.

We the undersigned businesses and organizations strongly support streamlining food date labels across the United States to clear up consumer confusion and reduce wasted food.

Zero Food Waste Coalition & Consumer Brands Association  
Amazon

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<sup>3</sup> *Why Should We Care About Food Waste?*, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., <https://www.usda.gov/about-food/food-safety/food-loss-and-waste/why-should-we-care-about-food-waste> (last visited Feb. 13, 2026); see also *Food Waste Monitor*, REFED INSIGHTS ENGINE, <https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?view=overview&year=2023> (last updated Feb. 24, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> MATTHEW P. RABBITT ET AL., USDA ECON. RSCH. SERV., HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN THE UNITED STATES IN 2024 9–10 (2025), <https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/113623/ERR-358.pdf?v=88938>.

<sup>5</sup> *Food Waste: The Problem*, REFED, [https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem/#what\\_is\\_food\\_waste](https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem/#what_is_food_waste) (last updated Feb. 24, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Frank Yiannas, *It's time to finally clear up food date label confusion for consumers*, AGRI-PULSE (Feb. 26, 2024, 1:59 PM), <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/20704-opinion-its-time-to-finally-clear-up-food-date-label-confusion-for-consumers>.

<sup>7</sup> RONI NEFF ET AL., CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD DATE LABELS: 2025 NATIONAL SURVEY 3 (2025), <https://chlp.org/resources/consumer-perceptions-of-food-date-labels-2025-national-survey>.

American Frozen Food Institute  
Bon Appétit Management Company  
Danone North America  
FMI – The Food Industry Association  
FoodMaven  
Goodr  
Gradible  
Hellmann's  
Joanna Berens Hospitality, Inc.  
Kipster  
Leanpath  
Mill Industries Inc.  
National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA)  
NCA - The National Confectioners Association  
Nestlé, USA  
Nutrberry  
Peelon  
Regenerative Shift  
Spoiler Alert  
Summer's Bounty 365  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance  
The Kroger Co.  
Too Good To Go  
Unilever United States  
Upcycled Food Association  
US Composting Council  
Walmart  
Winnow